

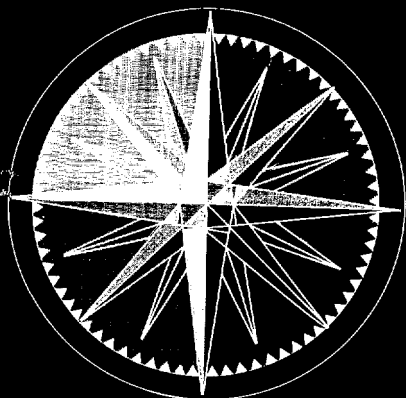
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SPECIAL REPORT

THE CONGO SINCE THE MOBUTU COUP

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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THE CONGO SINCE THE MOBUTU COUP

A few glimmers of hope for the Congo have appeared since General Mobutu's coup last November. Mobutu has largely silenced the civilian politicians for the time being, and the euphoria which attended the coup has not completely disappeared. Mobutu is making a sincere effort to combat some of the country's basic ills such as urban unemployment, inadequate agricultural production, a creaky transportation system, and government graft. The Congolese Army (ANC), with white mercenaries in the van, is making slow but steady progress against the rebels in the northern and eastern Congo, who have lost most of their outside sources of aid.

Nevertheless, the outlook for the Congo is still bleak. The central government, Mobutu's almost as much as any other, simply lacks the skills and the personnel to impose its will throughout the country. Unless a stronger authority begins to emanate from Leopoldville, the Congo's economic, political, and social malaise will continue.

Mobutu's Moves

Mobutu has put together a cabinet that compares favorably in ability with previous Congolese governments. To the extent that its members' ideology can be determined, it is one of the most solidly Western oriented since independence. Mobutu is also trying to increase his leverage with the governments in the 21 provinces, which have always compounded the corruption and inefficiency of the central government and have implemented its orders only when they wanted to or when threatened with ANC intervention. There have been some arrests for corruption, mostly of secondary and minor officials. Mobutu has halved the salaries of the national

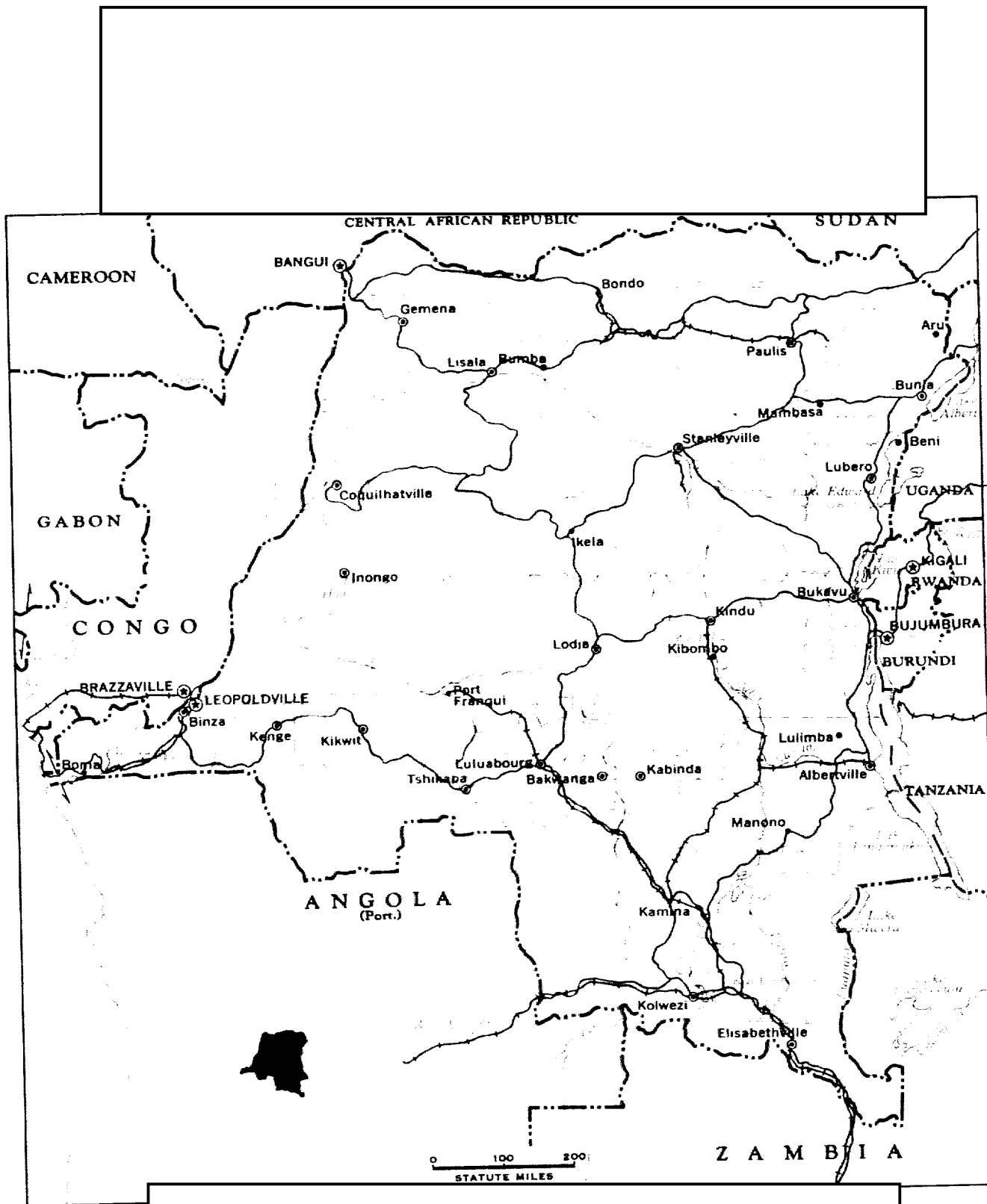
legislators and so far has succeeded in turning the parliament into a rubber stamp for his decrees.

The government is also making a more energetic effort than any of its predecessors to cope with some of the country's economic problems. It is encouraging the unemployed Congolese who have swelled the cities' populations since independence to return to their home areas. It is urging everyone to grow more food and is trying to improve the transport network for both cash and subsistence crops. It is working to bring smuggling under control and is otherwise trying to ameliorate the chronic foreign exchange shortage.

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Progress Against Rebels

Leopoldville's presence is gradually being re-established in the regions troubled by rebellion since 1964. The rebellion in Kwilu Province led by Peking-trained Pierre Mulele is confined to a few pockets of resistance in the deep forest. French- and Spanish-speaking mercenaries, helped by troops from Moise Tshombé's Katanga gendarmerie and occasionally by ANC units and by local tribal militia, are slowly regaining control of the major towns and the roads and railroads in the northeastern Congo. Near Lake Tanganyika, the South African mercenaries and their ANC counterparts are having much heavier going, since the rebels in this region are better armed and trained than those in the northeast. Even here, however, the rebellion seems to be losing ground.

Its outside supporters, including Communist China and Cuba, have grown disillusioned with the erratic fighting qualities of the rebels and the perennial squabbling among rebel leaders. They have drastically reduced their aid, and Cuba at least has withdrawn most of its advisers. After rebel defeats last October, the Tanzanian Government halted the transport of supplies already made difficult by the increasing effectiveness of the Congolese patrol boats on Lake Tanganyika.

The rebellion will continue to be a drain on the country's meager human and financial re-

sources for a long time, however, and the wounds it has caused will be hard to heal. Even the Kwilu revolt is still tying down 1,500 ANC troops, and activity in this area, which used to produce considerable palm oil, is still at a standstill. In the northeast the rebels can still move with relative freedom over wide stretches of country, not much of the area has re-entered the money economy, and much of what little is produced is smuggled out of the country (usually with the connivance of local civil and military officials).

In the long stretch of the eastern Congo extending north and west from Albertville, the rebels can still present an effective challenge to the available government forces. In both the northeast and east they are often supported by local populations, many of which have long histories either of opposition to central authority, of feuds between tribes, or of friction within tribes. These traditional frictions will remain long after the rebellion per se is snuffed out.

The rebels apparently still get a little aid from outside--

some Ugandan border garrisons are willing to pass arms. Even if no help at all came in, however, the ANC by itself would be hard pressed to cope with the rebellion, much less to maintain order in nominally pacified areas. Non-Congolese units thus will continue to bear the brunt of the fighting.

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Civil Operations

In civil affairs, Mobutu's programs are still little more than a mixture of decrees and wishful thinking, and there is not much chance that many of them will be put into effective operation. There is a real question, in fact, whether the Leopoldville government, with its scanty administrative and law-enforcement resources, can make any headway at all against either the economic malaise or the politics-as-usual of the entrenched local powers. To the extent that he does manage to get some of the reforms put into operation, Mobutu will disturb the mosaic of regional power centers out of which the politicians have operated for the last five years.

Among the populace at large, where initial reaction to Mobutu's take-over ranged from apathy to approval, opinion could turn against him if he succeeds in implementing some of his austerity proposals. If he fails to make significant headway, on the other hand, the postcoup euphoria will probably be replaced by a sour mood of disillusionment. Mobutu, who appears increasingly out of touch with the populace, apparently intends to make no particular effort to sell the program to the people.

Given the paucity of civilian talent (the rebels, in the areas they controlled, killed most Congolese with any education at all), Mobutu's chief instrument presumably will be the ANC, which has rarely been

tactful in its dealing with the Congolese populace or dedicated in its compliance with orders from Leopoldville. With very rare exceptions, the ANC has shown no ability to cope with rebellion on its own, and instances of its effective fulfillment of an administrative function are almost as scarce. It seems reasonable to expect that one result--perhaps the main one--of the army's further immersion in the country's internal affairs will be the further politicization of its officers, and that in the future, rivalries within the army and between military and civilian officials will be added to the endemic civilian political maneuvering.

The Politicians

The politicians themselves have only partly suspended their activity. Some of those in Mobutu's circle are busily feathering their nests [redacted]

[redacted] Those on the outs--by far the majority--are beginning to feel around cautiously for alliances which can present a viable challenge to Mobutu.

The principal opposition figure is still former premier Moise Tshombe, who now is in Europe. Tshombe appears to believe that the Mobutu regime will soon be weighted down by the problems confronting it, possibly in the next few months, and that he will be called on to save the situation as he was after the rebellion broke out in 1964. [redacted]

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[REDACTED]

opponents has also been reflected in politics in Kindu, the provincial capital.

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Last August, as part of the campaign against Tshombé, the results of the province's elections the preceding May were annulled on the grounds (probably accurate) that there had been many fraudulent returns. In October a decree of President Kasavubu declared a state of emergency and appointed an ANC officer, Major Potopoto, as "high commissioner" in place of the governor, a Tshombé man. The governor, who had Bakusu support, was one of the few competent Congolese administrators [REDACTED]

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Several recent occurrences illustrate the magnitude of these diverse problems. At a meeting with provincial governors in January, Mobutu harangued them about the need for pruning and cleaning up their administrations, for responding to Leopoldville's directives, and for encouraging economic activity. He gave each governor specific economic goals and apparently also succeeded in arranging for the payment of some key provincial officials directly from Leopoldville. Nevertheless, many of the meeting's final resolutions are devoted to requests from the governors for greater autonomy in such key fields as police, the control of foreign technicians, and the allocation of import quotas. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Potopoto worked to undermine the ex-governor and to build up his Warega-backed rival; he apparently also enriched himself in illegal currency and merchandise transactions.

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Early in January a commission arrived from Leopoldville to conduct a rerun of last May's elections. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the head of the commission was the agent of Transport and Communications Minister Nendaka, long a foe of Tshombé. Aided by Potopoto, he is said to have run the elections so as to favor the Warega opponent of the former governor; harassment of the latter was so intense that he eventually went into hiding.

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[REDACTED] the situation got so bad that

The Mess in Maniema

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An example of what Mobutu has to deal with at the local level is the situation in Maniema Province. Maniema has long been troubled by rivalry between the Bakusu and the Warega tribes, and the split at the national level between Tshombe and his

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Mobutu's interior minister intervened, ordered the elections run once again, and recalled both Potopoto and the commissioner to Leopoldville. On 22 January the minister personally conducted the elections--but the national deputies eventually chosen were those previously selected under the auspices of Potopoto and Nendaka's commissioner. The ex-governor was shunted off to Leopoldville as a national deputy. The new governor was the candidate of the anti-Tshombé, Warega-backed faction.

The main results of the whole incident were the further exacerbation of local tensions and the removal of one of the Congo's few able administrators.

Variations on the Maniema theme can be found throughout the Congo. Mobutu recently traveled to Kwilu to knock heads together there, and the governor of San-kuru has been arrested. The government can frequently muster its forces and get its way in glaring instances of provincial malfeasance.

Consolidating the government's position in these cases, much less in instances where it lacks the resources to intervene on a large scale, is another question. Given the shortage of administrative skills, the lack of money, and the endemic local rivalries, Mobutu's or any other government will be lucky to make any measurable progress toward unifying and integrating the Congo.

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